

Requests and Replies.

Will you kindly inform me what is the best popular book on Comparative Religion? Is Hardwick's *Christ and other Masters of value*?—J. D.

The request is for information on the best popular book on Comparative Religion (in English, I presume), and on the worth of Hardwick's *Christ and other Masters* in particular.

In reply, I should say that a popular book, thoroughly up to date, is still wanting. Hardwick is still a book of value, but requires to be both revised and supplemented. Other works of a popular order are Professor Moffat's *Comparative History of Religions* (New York), James Freeman Clarke's *Ten Great Religions*, Tiele's *Outlines of the History of Religion* (London, 1877), and Rawlinson's *Religions of the Ancient World*. A translation of Chantepie de la Saussaye's *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*: that will be more like what is needed. Principal Fairbairn of Mansfield College, whose volume of *Studies in the Philosophy of History and Religion* is of great interest, is understood to have a book on the same subject in hand.—S. D. F. SALMOND.

What are the various meanings attaching to the word "fool" in the Holy Scriptures? It appears to have at least two different meanings. This is plain in Prov. xxvi. 4, 5: "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou be like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit." Obviously there must be two meanings of "fool" here, or these counsels would be amazingly contradictory. There is a third meaning of this word "fool," however, and it is used by our Lord Himself: "Whosoever shall say to his brother . . . Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire" (Matt. v. 22). The R.V., quoted here, gives the marginal rendering of "Thou fool," thus: "*Or, Moreh*, a Hebrew expression of condemnation." I understand this to mean something very bad and reprehensible; but *what*? Here I need light, for we very quickly read of the Lord Himself saying unto the Pharisees, "Ye fools and blind" (Matt. xxiii. 17), anent the temple and the gold. Here, then, is a meaning which is at variance with Matt. v. 22, or the Master Himself would be dangerously near to the danger He there speaks of. The rich man who bent his mind on massing wealth in the celebrated parable of our Lord (Luke xii. 20) is thus addressed by the Father Himself: "Thou fool" (A.V.), "Thou foolish one, this night thy soul is required of thee" (R.V.). Again, therefore, we have a meaning at variance with Matt. v. 22, or the Father Himself would not be exempted, and Christ would really be a blasphemer. And,

lastly, St. Paul would come in condemnation also, for to the doubter of the Resurrection he says: "Thou foolish one" (R.V.); "Thou fool" (A.V.); "Senseless man" (Herbert); "that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened except it die" (1 Cor. xv. 36). Conybeare and Howson in their *St. Paul* render *Thou fool*, so that we have still another meaning at variance with Matt. v. 22. What, then, are the various meanings of this word rendered "fool"?—*A Young Baptist Layman*.

In Prov. xxvi. 4, 5, the word, of course, has the same meaning in both clauses; and the meaning refers to the different sides of the subject. If you answer a fool according to his folly, you run a great risk of being like him. If you do not answer a fool according to his folly, you run the risk of bolstering him up in his self-conceit, as if no reply could be given to him.

In Matt. v. 22, the admonition is against unrighteous anger; you are not to upbraid men or unjustly attack their character. You are to beware of everything approaching to a harsh and uncharitable disposition. *Mopé* is Syriac, denoting fool in a moral sense—that is, a wicked, impious person, equivalent to the Hebrew "Nabal." Of course it is not intended to prevent us expressing our opinion concerning foolish actions, as when we say "that man acts as a fool"; it is harsh and uncharitable judgment that is here condemned. Our Lord in calling the Pharisees "fools and blind," only expressed the feelings of righteous indignation. When in the parable God is represented as saying to the rich man, "Thou fool, this night thy soul is required of thee," it is an expression of the extreme foolishness of his conduct in preferring earthly riches to heavenly happiness.—P. J. GLOAG.

In reading the works of writers on the New Testament, I am frequently impelled to ask myself how much weight ought reasonably to be given to the exact meaning of the words used. Who would think of minutely examining the words used even by our best writers, and asserting that they had in their mind, when penning every word, its exact etymological meaning or signification? Still less should we think of examining the words of a historian in the same minute way. Now it appears to me that whilst it is perfectly reasonable to suppose that our Lord spoke with the utmost precision, it is *not* reasonable to suppose that the Evangelists remembered His *exact* words. They might retain the general meaning or drift of His words; but as we cannot admit that simple, unlettered men would feel the full force of each word, it is difficult to believe that they did not frequently in their "memorials" use words which

seemed to them to express the same thing, the same general idea, but which as a matter of fact did not. Moreover, the critical method in question does not stop at Christ's own words, but analyses the words used by the Evangelists in pure narrative. May I ask for a reply in an early issue of *The Expository Times*?—E. S.

(1) It is highly probable that our Lord spoke in Aramaic, and it is not only probable, but well attested by early writers, that St. Peter's and St. Matthew's recollections of what He said and did were originally composed in Aramaic also. When, therefore, St. Mark translated St. Peter's Memoirs from the Aramaic into Greek, a considerable sacrifice of precision must have been made. Yet in God's good providence the Aramaic original has been lost, the Greek version has been preserved, to teach us not to put our trust in the letter of Scripture, but in Him of whom it testifies.

(2) If both the Aramaic and the Greek editions of St. Peter's Memoirs were preserved in oral tradition for upwards of thirty years before they were committed to writing, a further loss in precision was, humanly speaking, inevitable. That such a loss really took place is shown by the verbal discrepancies which exist in those parts of the written Gospels which are common to three or two Evangelists.

(3) These considerations show that verbal precision is not absolutely necessary to a divine revelation. Neither is grammatical or philological precision. The Apostles were not classical scholars; they had not been trained in the rabbinical schools (Acts iv. 13). God chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise (1 Cor. i. 27). The Evangelists sometimes, as in the case of the word "transfigured," employ a term which does not express what was their evident meaning. St. Luke, writing for Gentiles, carefully avoids the word.

Yet, if I may use an illustration without irreverence, the instance of John Bunyan shows that an unlettered man, may under certain conditions produce work of far higher literary merit and intrinsic worth than was produced by his educated contemporaries. And in the case of Apostles, personal intercourse with Christ, and the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit, enabled them to write as never men wrote. And though we cannot insist on the correctness of every word which they employed, but must use common sense and the context in arriving at their meaning, still they were very far from being careless or inaccurate thinkers. The gospel sections, moreover, were moulded during oral transmission to express the faith and suit the need of Churches. And minute investigation into their meaning, if wisely and sympathetically applied, will, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, reap a rich harvest.—ARTHUR WRIGHT.

In 1 Corinthians x. 9, we read: "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." Does this mean that Christ was tempted by the Israelites in their journey through the wilderness?—A.

There is an important variant in the original text which indicates that this question suggested itself at a very early age. For instead of τὸν χριστόν,—the reading of the Received Text, on which the Authorized Version is founded,—the most ancient manuscripts of the New Testament read τὸν κύριον. The Codex Alexandrinus has τὸν θεόν: but this reading, however venerable its authority, may be rejected without hesitation; for it is evidently a correction introduced by the copyist with a view to the harmonizing of the passage with current phraseology. The reading of the Received Text, τὸν χριστόν, though resting on inconsiderable manuscript authority, is not without critical support. It is difficult, for instance, to understand how τὸν χριστόν could be substituted of set purpose for τὸν κύριον, which is a much simpler reading; whereas one can readily understand the substitution of τὸν κύριον for τὸν χριστόν. A copyist might very naturally, and without conscious intention, follow in the track of our Lord's words in the scene of the Temptation: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, τὸν κύριον, thy God." Yet, notwithstanding the force of subjective considerations, and the authority of such eminent scholars as De Wette, Billroth, Osiander, Stanley, and others, it is impossible to evade the conclusion that the preponderating evidence is in favour of τὸν κύριον. Even Meyer,—a very purist in his fidelity to the Received Text—is constrained to regard τὸν χριστόν not as an original reading, but as an interpretation. We must, therefore, render the passage according to the Revised Version: "Neither let us tempt the Lord, as some of them tempted," etc.

This being assumed, the question arises, To whom does the Apostle refer in his use of this term? If we turn to the Old Testament record of the event cited by St. Paul, we read: "And the people spake against God (Elohim), and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? . . . And the Lord (Jehovah) sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died" (Num. xxi. 5, 6). The name Jehovah is used throughout the record, save in the first clause above quoted. In the 78th Psalm, vers. 18, 19, where reference is made to this incident, we read: "And they tempted God in their heart. . . . Yea, they spake against God, they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" The name applied to the Divine Being throughout the entire Psalm, with but two exceptions, is El, or Elohim. It is clear, therefore, that the history itself does

not shed much light on the interpretation of τὸν κύριον in the passage before us.

If, however, we turn to the chapter which suggests the question at issue, we meet with a solution, which, if not complete, is less hampered by difficulty than any other that has been proposed. In the Revised Version, the chapter opens thus: "For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, how that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them; and the rock was Christ." It is true that the Apostle immediately adds: "Howbeit with most of them God was not well pleased," a parenthesis which perhaps forbids a dogmatic interpretation of the τὸν κύριον of ver. 9. But it is evident that St. Paul did not hesitate to believe and teach that the Eternal Word, though as yet unrevealed and non-incarnate, was ever present in the Church of the wilderness; and that manifestations of His spiritual and wonder-working power were vouchsafed to His people for their guidance and help. "From this and other passages," says Bishop Wordsworth, "the Fathers inferred that the Eternal Son of God revealed Himself before His incarnation . . . to the Patriarchs, and administered the affairs of the Old Dispensation."

The belief of the Church that the Son of God, not as yet incarnate, was "ever moving in the midst of Israel," is frequently and fully recognised in the New Testament. St. Peter, in his first Epistle, chap. i. 10, 11, speaks of the Spirit of Christ as having inspired the ancient prophets, and "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them. According to the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (xi. 26),

Moses esteemed "the reproach of Christ" as "greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." In the same direction is the teaching of Jude, who in the sixth verse of his Epistle reminds his readers that "the Lord (ὁ κύριος) having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not." This passage is the more interesting and significant from the fact that two of the most ancient manuscripts read, instead of ὁ κύριος, ὁ Ἰησοῦς,—a reading which Stier characterizes as "without example, and incomparably strange"; but which Lachmann adopts, and which Tregelles and Westcott and Hort regard with so much favour as to give it a place in the margin. One of the correctors of the Codex C reads ὁ θεός. Whatever the value of these variants may be, they indicate that there was a strong opinion in the early Christian Church as to the relation of the Eternal Word to the Church in the wilderness.

In view of these facts, and of the well-known usage of the New Testament to refer the term ὁ κύριος to Christ in every case in which it does not stand in a quotation from the Old Testament, it seems reasonable to assume that in this passage St. Paul represents our Lord as the Divine Being who accompanied His people in their memorable journey, and who so often appears under the Old Dispensation as "the Angel of the Lord," who, moreover, is spoken of by Isaiah as "the Angel of His Presence" (lxiii. 9); and in the last of the prophets, as "the Angel of the Covenant" (Mal. iii. 1). And it would seem as though the special reason which induced the Apostle to make this reference was, that he might emphasize the fact that in the abuse of their liberty the Corinthian Christians were sinning against, and thus tempting, their Lord and Saviour, who loved them, and gave Himself for them, even as their forefathers had tempted Him. —ROBERT N. YOUNG.

The Life of Abraham.

Bible Class Primers: The Life of Abraham. By C. ANDERSON SCOTT, B.A. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark. 6d.

THIS latest addition to the excellent series of Bible Class Primers issued under the editorship of Prof. Salmond is in every way worthy of its predecessors. It is an admirable example at once of compression and clearness. The facts of the Patriarch's life are related with a fulness and precision of arrangement that leave nothing to be desired. After a careful examination, I have found nothing of any essential moment omitted, while the relative importance of the successive incidents is duly taken into account in the treatment they receive. But the book is much more than a mere condensed narrative of Abraham's life. The place of the Patriarch in the

divine history of redemption, the meaning and purpose of the successive promises he received, the elements which went to form his faith, and its effects as manifested in his relations to God and men, his character as gradually formed under divine training, and his high standing as "the father of all them that believe," and "the Friend of God,"—all these varied topics are treated with a keenness of insight and a lucid simplicity of statement which make the work, though so unpretending in form, an expository treatise of no mean value. The outward conditions of life in the midst of which Abraham was placed,—first in his early Chaldean home, and afterwards as a stranger in the land of promise, surrounded by heathen tribes,—are made sufficiently vivid to give a satisfactory background to the picture.

R. MASSON BOYD.